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# **How to Make Individual Dress Forms**

**By George Weant.**





# HOW TO MAKE Individual Dress-Forms



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GEORGE WEANT

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## PREFACE.

So the beginning of the last century there has been, among women who do their own dress-making, an increasing demand for dress forms. The first forms put on the market were the simple non-adjustable ones but since no two people have a form exactly alike they were found unsatisfactory. This obstacle of dissimilarity in people's forms was partly removed by the invention of the adjustable forms, and with the realization that there is such a difference in every person's shape, the number of parts of the adjustable forms has been increased to almost a score.

This necessitated increase in the number of sections in the forms now on the market, alone proves that they do not come up to the standard of perfection. They fall far short of what they should be and what the home dress-maker would have them, the complete adjustability to the individuality of the person for whom the sewing is being done.

While non-adjustable and adjustable forms are a great boon to dress-making and the adjustable forms are as near the goal of the "individual form" as mechanical devices can make them, yet no human ingenuity can devise a machine made form which can be adjusted to be the exact counter-part of each of the twenty million women in the U. S. no two of which I dare say have forms exactly alike. Hence the need of the individual dress form.

There are at least ten million women in the U. S. who do their own sewing and are looking for a dress form with perfect individuality

and it is for these women that this book is written.

The method of making individual dress forms as described in this book is not an experiment, the process is patented and forms made and sold by the inventor have stood the tests of the most exacting and met with the hearty approval of women of all classes.

These forms may also be made for girls of any age and have been found to give the same satisfaction as those made for women with the exception that they are outgrown so quickly. Yet they will last at least a year and after learning the method hardly a mother will begrudge one day's work for the one year's service that the form will render.

The inventor spent a year in perfecting the process herein described and in experimenting tried paper-mache, plaster paris molds and other similar methods sometimes suggested, discarding them all as unsatisfactory. The composition and construction of the forms made by this method make them impervious to heat and water, hence when you have a form properly made you may be sure that with ordinary care it will last a life time.

That you will make a success of your first form is only a question of a little painstaking care and patience and when you have finished it you can justly and proudly say that you have an individual dress form that is the true copy of yourself.

## HOW TO MAKE INDIVIDUAL DRESS-FORMS

The materials necessary to make the dress-form described in this book are given in the following list:

- 2 pounds resin.
- 2 pounds Paro-wax.
- 5 pounds good plaster-paris.
- 1-2 pound bulk glue.
- 5 yards flat elastic, 1-4 inch.
- 2 yards flannelette.
- 1 heavy ribbed men's cotton undershirt (Get largest size obtainable, Size 50, if possible)
- 4 dozen drapery pins.

Before beginning work on the form it is absolutely necessary to have a marker which is made as follows: Get two strips of wood 5 feet long and 2 inches wide and 1 inch thick. Lay the two strips side by side, measure 12 inches from the end and at this point saw a notch 1-4 inch deep in both strips. Chisel these out and turn the notched sides together. Bore a 1-4 inch hole through both strips 9 inches from the notched ends and 2 inches from the other end.

From a dry-goods box make a foot-board about 20 inches long and 12 inches wide. (This may be made from narrow boards nailed together with cleats at the ends.) Now bore a hole (1-4 inch) about 6 inches from one end and 2 inches from one side. This board fits between the notched ends of the strips and the whole is bolted together with two 1-2 inch stove bolts. From a piece of iron barrel hoop cut a piece about 10 inches long somewhat the shape of a bread knife. Put a sharp point on this. (Do not make a cutting mark but one that will scratch and make a

mark.) This knife-like marker will slide between the two inch strips and make a straight mark which is **absolutely** necessary when making the form. You are now ready to begin work on the form. (Also of heavy telephone wire make four pins about 12 inches long. Sharpen one end of each.) Take a waist pattern that fits you, lay it on the shirt and cut around it. See that you do not waste any of the cloth (if you are careful there will be plenty) and when you are through you will have four pieces exactly like your pattern. Sew each pair of these together (front and back pieces, not the two front and two back) along the neck and shoulder slope and down the sides. Do not sew the arm holes. This will give you two half-shirts like FIG. I.

Take the drapery pins and pin them as shown (I FIG. I) along the edges both front and back on both half shirts spacing the pins 2 1-2 to 3 inches apart.

Next in any old kettle (that you do not care about) melt together the 2 pounds each of resin and wax. Melt this over a slow fire and stir constantly until all is dissolved as otherwise it will stick to the bottom and burn. When dissolved there will be a thick sediment at the bottom but this will do no harm.

Get a smooth board about ten inches wide and four feet long and place on an incline (six or eight inches high at one end) with the lower end in some pan or dish that will receive the board. You will also need a rolling pin and a quart bottle is ideal as it is easy to handle and clean.

You are now ready to soak the shirt in the solution. If it has cooled, heat it again. Now take one of the half-shirts and dip it into the solution (use a stick to lift out) and see that all parts of the shirt are saturated. Lift out



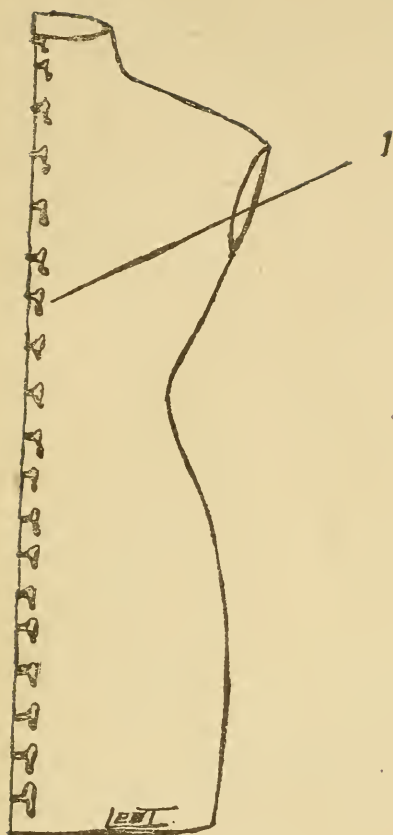


Fig. 1

and lay it on the inclined board and with the rolling pin roll out the surplus fluid. Press firmly but do not take out too much of the solution. Treat the other half-shirt in the same manner and lay on a newspaper to cool.

You are now ready to take the impression. The person of whom the impression is to be taken should wear a princess slip over the corset. To avoid soiling the undergarments, a half-shirt of cheese cloth should be put over the slip before the saturated shirt is put on. When you are ready put either one of the half-shirts in a pan and place in the oven. Heat until it is fairly hot so that all parts are soft and pliable, Take from the oven and place on either side of the person, pulling it on well. Now take the elastic, make a loop in one end and slip it over the top hook at the neck and begin to lace, working as many of the wrinkles as you can, out toward the hooks while lacing. Lace quickly and tightly as the elastic will take up the slack later. When you reach the bottom fasten the lacing and begin to mold the shirt to the body seeing that there are no wrinkles left except at the neck and under the arms and of these as few as possible. At the front of the arm there will always be a surplus amount of cloth. This must be pinched into a gore and pinned. Be careful not to pin into the underclothing. It is sometimes necessary to take up some surplus at the back in the same manner but not often. If there are a few wrinkles that you cannot get out do not be alarmed but get them the best you can. When you have it molded up snugly to your satisfaction, it is time to use the marker. Have the person stand with one foot on each side of the foot-board and place the nose in line with the center of the two upright strips. Now with the marker begin at

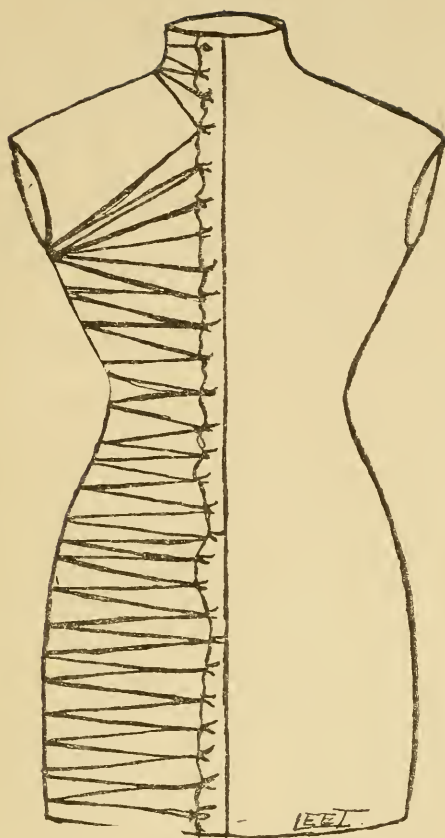


Fig. II

the neck and make a mark down the front of the form. Now have the person stand with the back to the upright and with the free arm place it (the upright) against the spinal column. Then make the mark down the back.

If the form has not hardened sufficiently, fan for a moment or apply ice cold cloths. After removing take two of the four pins you have ready and push them thru the half-form as shown (1 and 2 FIG. III) Run a stick (3 FIG. III) thru the armhole and hang in a cool place between two chairs or boxes. Proceed with the other half-form in the same manner. (Before putting on the clothing the exact measurements should be taken of neck, bust, waist and hip.)

Now with a sharp pen knife cut along the marks. When this is done the half form will be a little larger than necessary. Using one-half the exact measurements, measure around the half-form at the afore-mentioned places and if it is too large trim off the excess and lay the form (edges down) on the table to see that you have trimmed straight. Treat the other half-form in the same manner. Now take two of the strips with pins in and cut out two straight strips one inch wide. Sew one of these to the front of one of the half-forms (sew on the inside) and the other to the back of the other half-form (on the inside.) Now be sure that you get the half-forms together at the right place and sew them together as shown (FIG. IV.)

The wrinkles must be taken out next. Take a soldering iron or old case knife and heat, but not red hot. With this heat the wrinkles. While they are still soft push them in or out as the case requires. The gores at the arm may now be attended to but first trim off the bottom of the form until it will stand straight

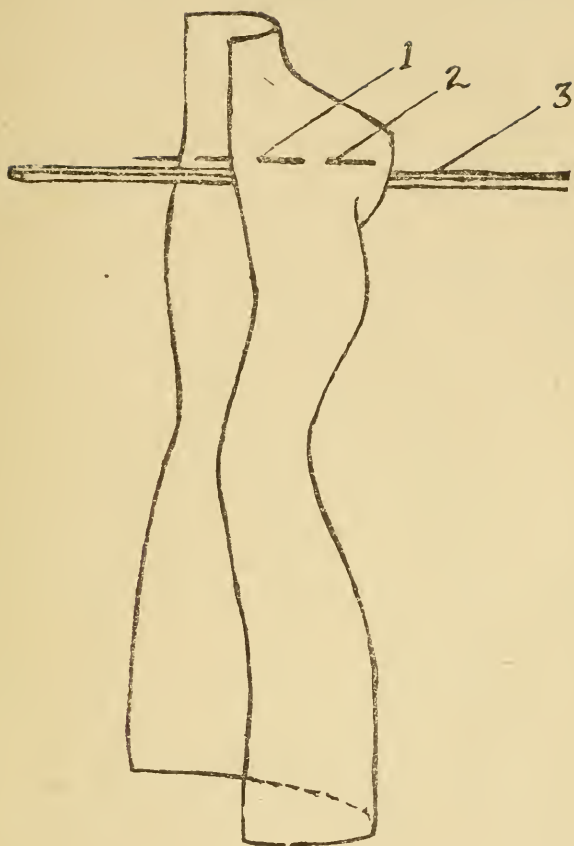


Fig. III

when placed on the table. From one of the waste strips cut a piece somewhat the size of the gores at the arms and sew on the inside. The protuding wrinkle may now be trimmed flush with the rest of the form. Treat all these pinched gores at the arms in the same way.

The waist gores are next. Have a cloth belt made (with a hook and-eye) to fit your exact waist measurement. Make allowance for the elasticity of the body. By trying the belt onto the form it will be found to be too small. The waist of the form must be made to fit the belt. With your knife make several gores (3 FIG. IV) and trim out slightly as (2 FIG. IV). Do not take out but a trifle from each gore but make six or eight gores, half in front and half in back. Try on the belt from time to time and when it will go on snugly, sew up the gores as shown (4 FIG. IV).

Now trim off the top of the neck and the armholes until they look well as in figures II and III. Trim off the bottom until it stands perfect on the table.

The plastering comes next. Get a pitcher of water, a bowl, two tablespoons and plenty of old rags cut to ten inch squares. Use one spoon in the dry plaster paris and the other for mixing. Mix only a table spoonful at a time as it sets quickly. Coat the outside first, holding the form with one hand on the inside. A thin coat of good plaster paris is sufficient. When the outside has been coated set away for an hour after which coat the inside. (As one rag becomes hard throw it away and get another.) Now put in the neck and bottom boards. Set the form on a board that is wide enough (1-2 inch or 5-8 inch thickness is best) and reaching in at the arm or neck mark around the inside. Saw this out with a com-

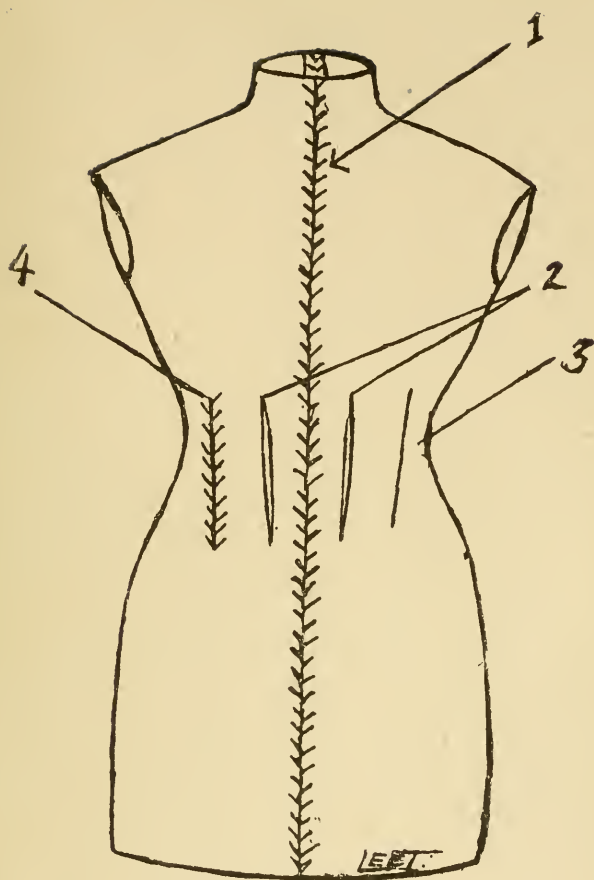


Fig. IV

pass saw. Make the neck board in the same way. Trim these down to fit snugly and before nailing in take them out and put on the cloth covering. For this use your flannelette. Prepare your glue, make it rather thin but not enough to run. Glue with an old brush and put on the cloth. When dry, slip in the neck and bottom boards, punch holes with a sharp awl around the edges and nail in the boards. Get the center of the bottom board, and bore a half inch hole. With this as a guide bore a hole in the neck board and the form is done.

The standard is the last. With the exception of the base the material may be bought at the plumber's. Get a 5-foot piece of 3-8 inch pipe threaded at one end, a 1-2 inch tee with a 1-4 inch side (or a 1-2 inch side with a 1-4 inch reducer) a 1-4 inch nipple 4 inches long threaded at both ends and run down more at one end than at the other, and a 1-4 inch tee. Screw the short threaded end of the nipple into the side of the 1-4 inch tee and the long threaded end into the 1-4 inch side of the 1-2 inch tee and slip it (the 1-2 inch tee) over the 3-8 inch pipe. The nipple may then be tightened at any height desired and will hold the form from slipping on the standard. Tightening with the hand will be sufficient. If the nipple is not threaded enough to grip the standard, run the threads down until it does. The base may be made of wood and the pipe held in position by plaster paris which is poured into the 1-2 inch hole in the center of the base, and into which the pipe is inserted and left to set.



## DIFFICULTIES SOMETIMES ENCOUNTERED.

1. When the half-forms are hung up on the wires they will sometimes sag out of shape but can be sprung back into shape even when it seems beyond recovery.

2. When working with the half-forms after the impression is taken do not work near a fire or in a heated room. It is best to work in a cool room.

3. When you have the half-forms trimmed off at the marks they will sometimes be found to be from one-half to three-quarters of an inch too large. If so, measure from the front edge of half-form around to the back (at neck, waist, bust and hip) use one-half the exact measurements and put a pin thru the form at the right distance. This will probably give different margins at the back (such as 3-4 inch at the waist, 1-2 inch at bust, etc.) Take one-half of each margin (as at bust 1-2 inch which will make 1-4 inch) and move the back pin 1-4 inch toward the back edge and at the front put in a pin 1-4 inch from front edge. Do this all along at the aforementioned measurements. Now lay a yard stick in line with the pins and make a mark. Trim both sides off at these marks and the half-form is perfect. Trim the other half-form in the same manner.

4. When the form is sewn together and you are working on the gores do not stand the form on the table when you stop work a minute. Hang on the wires or lay on the table.

5. Before plastering the outside put some cross pieces of wood in the bottom and neck to hold in shape while working with it.





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